

## **Interpretation of the Movie “Peaceful Warrior”**

### **From the Views of Ch’an Philosophy and Logic-Based Therapy (LBT)**

**Ho-Ling HSU, Ph.D.**

*Ho-Ling HSU is an Associate Professor, Graduate Institute of Religious Studies, Fo Guang University, Taiwan; and is certified in Logic-Based Therapy from the Taiwan and U.S. Centers for Logic-Based Therapy. She is Executive Director of the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association, and has been an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy at Fu-Jen University, Taiwan. She teaches Buddhist philosophical counseling, Methods of Consulting in Chinese Philosophy, Life & Death Studies, Buddhist Ethics, Philosophy of Hua-yen Buddhism, Philosophy of Zen Buddhism, among other courses.*

**Abstract:** The American movie, “Peaceful Warrior” (2006), starring Scott Mechlowicz and Nick Nolte, is a story about an outstanding athlete’s perplexities and anxieties. The main character in the movie, Dan Millman, aggressively pushes his performance in order to become a top athlete. As a result, he develops feelings of perplexity and anxiety, and suffers daily from these problems, leading to insomnia. The other character in the movie, Socrates, who works at a gas station, is like a philosopher. Socrates not only helps others to feel better, he can also help himself; in other words, he provides philosophical counseling services. In this paper, I utilize a combination of Buddhist philosophy and Logic-based Therapy (LBT) to interpret and analyze scenarios from this Movie, hoping to provide materials for philosophical counseling. The Buddhist philosophy I use includes the Ch’an philosophies of attachment, contemplation, greed, animosity, ignorance, non-duality, and meditation. The Five Steps of Logic-Based Therapy I incorporate include: (1) identifying the counselee’s emotional reasoning; (2) identifying any irrational premises; (3) refuting any irrational premises; (4) finding antidotes to the refuted premises; and (5) exercising willpower in overcoming cognitive dissonance.

There are six aspects that I address in this paper. The first is the anxieties of the Movie’s main character, Dan. The second is the philosophical counseling approach attained by combining Ch’an philosophy and Logic-based Therapy. The third is “knowing the dissatisfactions,” i.e. the process of finding one’s emotional reasoning/irrational premises. The fourth is “terminating the causes (of the dissatisfactions),” i.e. refuting the irrational premises. The fifth is “cultivating the path,” i.e. finding an antidote to the refuted premises. And the sixth aspect is “realizing the cessation (awakening),” i.e., exercising willpower in overcoming cognitive dissonance.

#### **Keywords:**

Ch’an, Logic-Based Therapy (LBT), philosophical counseling, Peaceful Warrior.

## **I. An Athlete's Anxieties in the "Peaceful Warrior"**

Two social incidents have recently occurred in Taiwan. One is the suicide of a young artist, whose reason for committing suicide was internet-bullying. Another incident is the murder of a medical school student by his good friend and classmate, as a result of jealousy over the victim's girlfriend. These two incidents should cause us to contemplate the issue of life and death, for most people in our society are concerned with the management of future-plans, and often focus on how to prepare for death, and how to deal with it when it occurs. Our society also encourages young people to "chase after their dreams" and work diligently towards achieving those dreams. However, society does not teach young people how to deal with failure when their dreams are not achieved, nor how to use wisdom to deal with the obstacles they encounter along the way. Not to mention guiding young people in finding meaning in their lives in order to "realize their dreams."

The American movie, "Peaceful Warrior," is an adaptation of a true story. In this film, the main character, Dan Millman, is a collegiate gymnast. Dan comes from a wealthy family; he is an intelligent student with good grades, good looks, and a successful relationship, as well as excellent knowledge of gymnastic exercises. However, even with his well-to-do physical and material conditions while growing up, Dan could not escape from the anxieties and fears he experienced, eventually leading to sleepless nights. Could the reason for Dan's problems have been that, coming from a wealthy family, he had not encountered many obstacles and therefore felt helpless as soon as he encountered something that was not to his satisfaction? An athlete's performance in a competition often results in joy, or sorrow, in pursuit of a "once-in-a-lifetime" chance. As a matter of fact, many athletes suffer from great mental pressure when they encounter obstacles in their training processes. From training and practice to competition itself, athletes incur injuries, setbacks, and failures throughout their careers. Top-performing athletes' anxieties and fears come from their demands on themselves to be the best-of-the-best and from anticipation of their performance results. Thus, they constantly worry about failing, which can eventually lead to insomnia. These athletes are not satisfied with just living in the moment; for all they are concerned about is winning the trophy. All that matters to them is the final result, not how they attain it. In such cases, they ignore the many other valuable cognitive-emotive aspects of their lives, such as exploring the meaning of life, engaging in interpersonal relationships, and dealing with emotional problems. Perhaps, Dan never experienced anxiety while growing up; but, even if he did, he never learned how to deal with it; therefore, his level of anxiety mounted when he confronted the uncertainty of Olympic team selection. Consequently, it was not surprising that Dan was "freaked out" when Socrates asked him, "If you don't make the Olympic team, what will you do?" As an athlete, Dan's anxieties stemmed from "not knowing himself," as he ruminated about getting selected to the Olympic team and getting the gold medal. Rather than focusing on things that were

within his control, he spent his energies worrying about whether or not he was practicing enough. That is why Socrates said to him, “That’s the difference between us, Dan. You practice gymnastics, I practice everything.” For athletes spend most of their times in training their bodily prowess, putting the rest of their lives on “automatic pilot.” In Dan’s mind, “My dad's got plenty of cash, school's kind of a breeze, I get straight A's. I got great friends, I'm in great shape, and I only sleep alone when I absolutely want to.” Though it seems that he had attained perfect scores in family, talents, school, friends, physique, and relationships, in actuality, Dan had drifted off course in life; he needed training in calming his mind, logical thinking, and strengthening his willpower.

In this film, Socrates represents philosophy; he symbolizes the love of wisdom. Philosophical counseling assists people in learning to live in the here-and-now, not to ruminate about the past or worry about the future. Through rational self-dialogues, this kind of counseling attends to every aspect of life by examining how one lives his/her life, how to resolve anxieties and worries, eventually gaining balance between body and mind and living a prosperous life. LBT's therapeutic goals are in promoting the functional and avoiding the dysfunctional.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I maintain that, through philosophical counseling, a counselor can use films as creative spaces or media through which to help the counselee. The use of films for this purpose is possible because they often already possess metaphorical functions, and through interregional, intercultural, and international themes, films explore various perplexities and anxieties faced by humanity as a whole. As Dan said, “I want to get rid of the old stuff.....” and asked Socrates, “You know you got two different shoes on, right?” Socrates replied “One’s a little newer than the other.” The philosophical counselor can guide the counselee in refuting erroneous thinking, formulating an antidote, and bringing the mind back into balance. A counselor can discuss scenarios from a film or story, which resonate with the counselee’s problems, to assist the counselee in “seeing” his/her problems, and attaining insights into his/her life.

As discussed in “On How Buddhist Counseling Transforms and Heals Hatred—Milarepa”<sup>2</sup> a counselor can assist the counselee in formulating his/her antidotes and finding a cure through the method of philosophical readings. The practice of philosophy airs in everyday life. As the saying goes, “Art imitates life; life imitates art”; using the themes of films as a counseling medium, a counselee can discover, for example, that he is a so-called “dutiful worrier”; for his worries in certain matters may be manifested in lack of self-confidence, even though his performance may improve as a result of the worrying. Through the combination of Ch’an philosophy and the LBT approach formulated by Dr. Elliot Cohen, great inspiration and healing can be achieved through comparative study of a film character’s circumstances, emotions, thoughts, actions, and the distresses in actual human life.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cohen, Elliot D, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop In Logic-Based Therapy Handbook*, 186.

<sup>2</sup> Ho-Ling HSU, *Philosophy and Culture*; Volume 41 4 (2014/04/01), P103 - 120

## II. Philosophical Counseling with Ch'an and LBT

Dr. Cohen Points out that “Antidotes are about your thinking. They tell how to correct a flaw in your thinking. No, more exactly, you tell yourself how to correct a flaw. They are you talking sense to yourself. They are self-talk. They are you talking yourself out of what you have irrationally talked yourself into.”<sup>3</sup> In this paper, I seek to use the scenarios from a film as a creative formula to transform both Eastern and Western philosophies into healing remedies for those in need. I interpret the film, “Peaceful Warrior,” by using both schools’ philosophies, and turning this method into applicable materials for philosophical counseling.

The main character in this film, Dan Millman, manifested an athlete’s perplexities and dissatisfactions, such as, materialistic and sexual desires; inner obsessions and fears; changes to his life brought on by a car accident; conversations with Socrates; his teammate competing for the pommel vault; quarreling over his girlfriend because of jealousy; anger when his coach gave up on him; concerns about physical appearance; and foolishly deeming the gold medal and trophy as the attainment of prosperity. Dan’s Three Poisons, greed, animosity, and ignorance, reflect three types of dissatisfaction: dissatisfaction from not getting what he wanted (getting selected to the Olympic team—his mind could not settle down in peace), dissatisfaction from engagement with set-backs (suffering a broken leg from the car accident; his coach giving up on him; losing qualification for the Olympic team selection); and dissatisfaction from separation from what he loved (“no beer, no meat, no girls”). The other main character in the film is Socrates (Joy called him “Big Buddha” and Socrates, in turn, called Joy “Little Buddha”). Is he a representation of an actual personal friend, a secrete friend, or the voice inside, or, as the film depicts, Dan’s moral intuition? Socrates’ wise admonitions and his various dialogues with Dan could be interpreted as a set of rational monologues. Through a series of Socrates’ questions, can we discover Dan’s perplexities? These questions include: “Are you happy?” “What is the meaning of the trophy?” and “What kind of a warrior are you?” Can these questions Socrates poses bring us to identify Dan’s irrational thoughts or chronic negative thinking, such as going after perfection, repeating what others are saying, making things more severe than they appear, and demanding control? Can they help us arrive at LBT’s antidotal advice such as to “...give yourself permission to be human” and “to make mistakes...”<sup>4</sup> Can we identify Dan’s emotional reasoning? In addition, can Socrates help us point out Dan’s convictions behind his facade, his preset values (“all the old stuff”) as well as his incorrect reasoning?

Consider Dan’s gymnastics coach. We can see him as coaching Dan in overcoming his emotional

---

<sup>3</sup> Cohen, Elliot D. *The New Rational Therapy: thinking your way to serenity, success, and profound happiness*, 148.

<sup>4</sup>Cohen, Elliot D. *What Would Aristotle Do? Self-Control through the Power of Reason*, 149.

problems, in order to help him straighten out, and take control of his own life. In addition, there are also characters such as Dan's teammates and competitors. Regarding Dan's interactions and competition with them, Socrates advised him, "There is no 'better.' You will never be better. Same way you'll never be less than anybody else." There is also a female character, Joy, who can represent joyfulness.

I maintain that the major theme of "Peaceful Warrior" entails The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism-- know the dissatisfactions, terminate the causes, cultivate the path, realize the cessation-- which are interpretations of suffering from, and cessation of dissatisfaction. Buddhism is a real life cultivation of integrating mind and body to live in the here and now. Buddhism teaches us to explore and realize the ultimate essences of life's dissatisfactions--impermanence and emptiness, as well as how to be aware of the mind, discard distracting thoughts, abandon attachments, discipline oneself using the Five Precepts (no killing, stealing, illicit sexual conduct, lying, or intoxicants), meditate, and experience self-awakening (enlightenment). Experiences and direct observations are the basis for clear reflections. They show us the way to treat our thoughts and emotional mind states well (not to be drawn into dissatisfactions), resulting in the best of judgments. Buddhism teaches us to utilize Right Views to train the Right Reflections (Thoughts), in order to recognize those perceptions which collect from dissatisfactions, desires, anger, and prejudice. From the perspective of Ch'an philosophy, self-discipline and moderation with the Five Precepts, as applied to material desires (represented in the film as smoking, drinking, and going to night clubs), can teach us to consistently overcome such self-destructive desires. Ch'an is a middle (neutral) path to the cultivations in life. It teaches us to pick ourselves up from where we have fallen. After contemplating the relationship between seeking pleasure and prosperity, seeking the right antidote and philosophical wisdom are then followed. In practice, philosophical counselors can assign their counselees appropriate exercises. For example, in the film, after experiencing a leg injury and depression, Dan started physical therapy and carried out exercises in self-affirmation.

### **III. Knowing the Dissatisfactions—Process of Emotional Reasoning/Irrational Premises**

In the film, Socrates' question, "I mean, are you really happy?" pertains to the activities that comprise happiness. Dan asks Socrates "what does happy have to do with anything?" Socrates answers, "Everything." Happiness could also be differentiated into short-term or long-term happiness. Paradoxically, the type of happiness that we seek after at times can lead us further away from happiness. As Dan claims, "When I get what I want, I'll be happy. For real and forever and anything else I say it'll be. 'Cause I will make it happen." However, Socrates admonishes that "Nearly all of humanity shares your predicament, Dan. If you don't get what you want, you suffer. And even when you get exactly what you want, you still suffer because you can't hold onto it forever." This happens when we encounter circumstances that are not what we wished for. As

reflected in the film, Dan's desires and emotions mirror dissatisfaction from not getting what he wants (such as his desire to be chosen for the Olympic team), dissatisfaction from resentment and indignation (frustration over his broken leg, missing the Olympic team selection, and his coach giving up on him), as well as dissatisfaction from abandoning what he loved (going to night clubs, picking up girls, eating meat, drinking beer). Socrates points out Dan's irrational premises by saying, "If I was your trainer, no meat, no TV, no alcohol, no drugs and no sex." The ability to solve any difficult problem starts with rational comprehension. This statement can be interpreted in the film as Dan finally gaining peace of mind by attaining the wisdom to solve his problems of anxiety and endless enquires. For example, Socrates questions can be interpreted as probing into the causes of Dan's anxieties, fears, phobias, and anger. Why has Dan been feeling these anxieties, fears, phobias, and anger? What are the obstacles to Dan's line of thought? According to LBT, the first step is to identify behavioral and emotional reasoning. In Dan's case, what is the emotional reasoning that leads him to have nightmares night after night (nightmares of falling off the ring during the competition and breaking his legs), hurried breathing, and insomnia? Following the outline for Dr. Cohen's "Eleven Most Commonplace and Destructive Fallacies," Dan's destructive thinking habits include demanding control, magnifying risks, demanding perfection, bandwagon reasoning, awfulizing, making a stink, and I-can't-stand-its.

In the beginning of the film, the blurry images of Dan trapped in a nightmare of what he is most afraid of, and not wishing for it to happen—breaking his leg—then waking up from this nightmare, is symbolic of failing to get the gold (also signifying confusion and awakening). Eventually, what occurred in Dan's "dream" became a "reality" when he caused a speeding accident as a result of fear for being late to the Olympic team selection. Dan developed fear and phobia as a result of magnifying risks. This is a reflection of "Exaggerating the chances of something undesirable happening."<sup>5</sup> The odds and differences of Dan breaking his leg during the competition and being in a car accident as a result of speeding are thus immediately distinguished. It is undeniable that athletes getting hurt during competitions *can* happen, but that does not mean it *will* (definitely) happen.

Another one of Dan's destructive thinking habits is his demand for perfection. Dan did not realize that "an athlete who demands that she always be at the top of her game will experience intense anxiety even while doing well; for the possibility of falling from grace is always a genuine possibility. Such individuals therefore rarely find times when they can relax and enjoy their accomplishments or other meaningful aspects of their lives."<sup>6</sup> Dan demanded unrealistic things such as that he always performs perfectly; nothing bad ever happens to him; he never loses anything of substantial value to him; and he always gets what he wants.<sup>7</sup> According to Dr. Cohen, the

---

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 160.

<sup>6</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 162.

<sup>7</sup> Cohen, *The New Rational Therapy*, 28.

following absolutistic demands are irrational and self-destructive:<sup>8</sup>

- I must never fail at \_\_\_\_\_. (In Dan’s case, this includes his performance on the rings, qualifying rounds, and competitions.)
- Bad things must never happen to me. (In Dan’s case, bad things include not qualifying for the team, not being able to compete in The Olympics, not getting the gold, and being robbed.)
- I must always have the approval of \_\_\_\_\_. (In Dan’s case, this includes his father, coach, and teammates.)

The above irrational rules can be interpreted in the film as things Socrates admonishes Dan about: You fail to perform perfectly. Something bad happens to you. You lose something of substantial value to you. You don’t get what you want.<sup>9</sup>

Dan demanded that he must not fail. Therefore, he was ambitious about performing a routine that required extreme skill, such as making three consecutive flips before he dismounts from the rings. Dan believed that success in making that routine would “make him Lord of the Flies.” However, Dan set himself up for failure because it is impossible to be perfect, and to never fail in sports. Indeed, Dan’s coach regarded his demand for perfection (a perfect routine and score) as suicidal. He admonished Dan, “Nobody on this planet can do what you are trying to do. You are great up there, Danny. You’re one of the best I’ve seen. You’re gonna rank even higher than you did last year, and you might make it through all the qualifiers if you don’t kill yourself first.”

Demanding not to fail is a common form of demanding perfection. LBT analyzes it as “the demand that bad things must never happen to me,” and it offers the following “Emotional Reasoning Template” (ERT) or form of emotional reasoning for this fallacy:<sup>10</sup>

- If [enter perceived personal defect], then I am [enter personal self-evaluation].
- [Enter perceived personal defect].
- Therefore, I am \_\_\_\_\_.

When we apply this template in Dan’s situation, we get the following emotional reasoning:

- Rule: If I can’t qualify (O), then I’m a failure (R).
- Report: I can’t qualify. (O)
- Conclusion: I’m a failure. (R)

Analogous to ERTs, behavioral reasoning templates (BRTs) can be constructed using a given justification (J) + a given Prescription (P). The following is a BRT:<sup>11</sup>

- Behavioral Rule: If I am/have [enter perceived personal defect], then I should [enter prescribed behavior].

---

<sup>8</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 159.

<sup>9</sup> Cohen, *The New Rational Therapy*, 28.

<sup>10</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 27.

<sup>11</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 30.

- Justification: I am/have [Enter perceived personal defect].
- Behavioral Prescription: So, I Should \_\_\_\_\_.

Then Dan's behavioral reasoning can be generated from this BRT:

- Behavioral Rule: If I am a failure then I should end my life.
- Justification: I am a failure.
- Behavioral Prescription: So, I *should* end my life.

In this way, we can see just why Dan attempted suicide. Fortunately, in the end, Dan realized that his irrational premises were what he should be giving up.

Dan's demand for control is also a type of demand for perfection. This demand for control is closely connected to anxiety and affects future orientations. For example, Dan felt that "even as good as I am, I gotta do everything I can to make sure that I qualify," and he could not realize that "Chasing after the gold" makes him live "in fear that (he) might fail." According to Dr. Cohen, people like Dan usually "demand that they control their obsessive thoughts and thereby exacerbate their anxiety."<sup>12</sup> "Moreover, the possibilities of worse things happening, such as loss of health or life or a limb are often magnified and distorted."<sup>13</sup> They live inside a pressure cooker. The doctor's diagnosis of Dan's leg injury that he is not "strong enough to compete," that he may "spend the rest of (his) life in a wheelchair," brought further distress to Dan and brought his demand that bad things must never happen to him to the surface. When more "bad" things happened to Dan--not being able to compete, his coach giving up on him, being robbed, not being able to get on the rings--Dan felt that all of his training and practice had gone to waste. As a result, his negative emotions continued to escalate. His over-concern about his scores made him perform worse; his obsession with not making a mistake elevated his fear; and he became dutifully worried. All the while, Dan never contemplated the possibility of not being able to get on the Olympic team. He felt that that was the goal of all his training and practice, which is a very simple motive. However, when he saw how easily Socrates could climb up the high walls at the gas station, he was envious and doubtful; he felt Socrates' moves were miraculous; it was something he wanted but could not do.

A further kind of demanding perfection is the demand for approval from others, which "tends to make their own approval of others or of themselves dependent upon whether or not such approval is reciprocated." This leads to the irrational idea that, "if you treat me poorly, then I will treat you or myself the same."<sup>14</sup> For example, Dan had a misconception that "I must always have approval from my coach or teammates" regarding performance in gymnastics, food and drink, making friends, etc. Dan had thought that he's "got great friends," however, when he was prompted to think further, his emotion became defensive, "we're supposed to be friends, man." When Tommy's friend tells Dan that, "you're a jerk who treats his friends like dirt," this made Dan realize that he really did not treat

---

<sup>12</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 164.

<sup>13</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 163.

<sup>14</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 165.



his friends right. “Sometimes, I don't like myself very much. My first thought was about how maybe Kyle's fall could work out for me.” Dan admitted that he hasn't “always been a very good friend.” “In fact, I can't remember the last time I was somebody's good friend.” From the perspective of multiple gains, Dan argued that, “I mean, what are you gonna do when we're always competing against each other?” This is Dan's reflection on how his relationships with his friends always involved competition. In addition, when Dan's girlfriend said to him, “You guys are in such great shape,” Dan's reaction was “So if I wasn't in such great shape, wasn't on the gymnastics team, just had a regular body, you wouldn't be into me?” His girlfriend smartly replied, “If I didn't have this body, would you be into me?” From the above dialogues, the emotional reasoning for Dan's demand for approval appears to be as follow:

- Rule: If physically fit girls do not find me sexually desirable, then I'm not a worthy person.
- Report: If I do not get into good shape, then they won't find me sexually desirable.
- Emotion: Anxiety about being weak.<sup>15</sup>

Dan also had a further destructive fallacy, that of “bandwagon reasoning,” which “often involves an inference from the demand for approval of others.”<sup>16</sup> According to this fallacy, “If your friends, the popular or trendy guys, your schoolmates, the crowd, the average guy or some other group you admire is acting, thinking, or feeling in a certain way, then you must make yourself act, think, and feel in exactly the same way.”<sup>17</sup> As a popular athlete in college, Dan appeared to believe that, if most people liked drinking and picking up girls, then he should follow suit. However, Socrates refuted Dan's misconception by saying, “Everyone tells you what to do and what's good for you. They don't want you to find your own answers. They want you to believe theirs.” In Dan's perception, crying was a sign of worthlessness. Social pressure, his father's scolding, and the coach's criticisms all led to Dan's depression, and were the basis for rating himself as “worthless” (R). Dan felt that his existence was hopeless and he doubted his own value. He felt that whatever his Dad said was right and that if “the Coach thinks I'm worthless. I am worthless. I'm a worthless piece of shit.” The flow of negative comments such as “you're looking like a worthless piece of shit” caused Dan to have such negative emotional reasoning:

- Rule: If the Coach thinks I'm worthless, then I must be worthless.
- Report: The Coach often says that I'm worthless.
- Emotion: Therefore, I must be worthless.

Still, a further fallacy that Dan committed is a type of “awfulizing” involving “terrificizing” what you have lost. This “halo syndrome” trades on the assumption that the more valuable the thing lost is, the worse it is to have lost it, so that the loss of something perfect is equivalent to the worst thing imaginable.”<sup>18</sup> In Dan's case, this chain of reasoning is as follows:

---

<sup>15</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 210.

<sup>16</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 165.

<sup>17</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 130.

<sup>18</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 235.

- Awfulizing: My shape was so great but now that I've broken my leg, my whole life is over, and nothing else will ever matter again.
- I-can't-stand-it-it-is: Since something so terrible as this happened to me, I can't stand to go on living anymore.
- Emotion: Depression about having broken his leg.

Dan's deduction to "I-can't-stand-it-it is" itself derives from long-term "catastrophic reasoning," strong anxieties from demanding that he not fail, and his demand that nothing bad happen to him.<sup>19</sup> Catastrophic reasoning results in a sense of helplessness. In Dan's situation, a broken leg robbed him of his dream of getting the gold medal; he thus felt helplessly cut out of the Olympic competition forever.

For Dan, his obstacles derived from his demanding control, especially control of the things that he could not control, which were also things most important to him. These obstacles, when further infused with the illogic of awfulizing, promoted Dan's loss of self-control. In particular, Dan experienced anger towards the Coach and depression when he informed Dan that he could not join the Olympic team.

A still further fallacy Dan committed was "making a stink," according to which "If you are having a problem being respected, understood, heard, or heeded, then you must kick, scream, yell, or otherwise throw a temper tantrum."<sup>20</sup> Dan committed this fallacy when, after the Coach refused to allow him back on the gymnastics team, he shouted at him, exclaiming that he "can't give up on (him)!" Later on, Dan went back to his dorm room and destroyed all the medals and trophies that he had previously won. Afterwards, when Dan was on top of the school's bell tower, he realized that he must let go of his false perceptions in order to solve his problem, and that by jumping off the bell tower, he would only kill himself, but would still not solve his problem.

The habits of false reasoning are often related in a chain. According to Dr. Cohen, these are called "Fallacy Syndromes."<sup>21</sup> Dan's syndrome proceeds as follows:

- Slippery Slope: As I haven't yet gotten well (I have a metal rod in my leg), I will never get back on the rings, and all my training will have been wasted.
- Awfulizing: As I will never get back on the rings, and all of my training will have been wasted, it's awful.
- I-Can't-Stand-It-Itis : As something so awful has happened to me, I can't stand it.
- Emotion: Depression about not being able to compete (with thoughts of the futility of all his years of work).

---

<sup>19</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 151.

<sup>20</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 129.

<sup>21</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 132.

#### **IV. Terminating the Causes (of the Dissatisfactions)—Refuting the Irrational Premises**

The second step in the LBT method is that of refuting the fallacies in one's thinking. This step can be carried out by finding counter-examples, disconfirming empirical evidence, inconsistencies or double standards, as well as premises which entail a false or absurd statement.<sup>22</sup> As we can see from the preceding analysis, Dan's negative thinking habits include demanding control, magnifying risks, demanding perfection, demanding approval, bandwagon reasoning, awfulizing, making a stink, and I-can't-stand-it-itis.

With respect to "magnifying risks," we can see that, as an outstanding athlete, Dan regarded his injuries and not getting the gold as a very awful thing, which led to his nightmares and fears. However, Dan did not realize that, paradoxically, his magnifying risks (as in his nightmares about breaking his legs) would actually increase the chances of such an unfortunate accident. That is precisely why LBT refutes the fallacy of "magnifying risks" by admonishing that "Risk assessment depends on evidence, not on how bad you think something is or how afraid of it you are."<sup>23</sup> In the movie, this is depicted in Dan's assessing the chances of breaking his leg during practice relative to that of getting injured in a car accident. The variance between these two chances happening can be immediately distinguished. As LBT suggests, "the fact that something bad can happen does not mean that it will happen (the infamous "Murphy's Law")."<sup>24</sup> Though we cannot deny that an athlete's getting injured during training or competition is possible, that does not mean that getting injured will occur.

Regarding the fallacy of demanding perfection, Dan demanded that bad things not happen to him. These bad things included not getting selected to the team, not being able to compete in the Olympic games, not getting the gold medal, and not getting robbed. According to LBT's emotional rule and report templates, Dan's stubborn insistence that the above bad things must never happen is inconsistent with reality. That is, "it is also unrealistic to demand perfect certainty in resolving your practical problems before you can stop thinking about them."<sup>25</sup> Therefore, it is important to refute demanding perfection. This refutation includes abandoning the thought that you can control everything. On the contrary, "you should accept rational limits to the control you can exercise over a situation";<sup>26</sup> Further, instead of living in denial, realize, as Socrates pointed out in Dan's case, "you must surrender the one thing you never have and never will, control. Accept that we don't control what will happen to you." According to LBT, "the refutation of demanding control of everything is the undeniable fact that there are things in the external world that are clearly not in

---

<sup>22</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 31.

<sup>23</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 160.

<sup>24</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 160.

<sup>25</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 153.

<sup>26</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 217.

human control, and therefore it is unreasonable to try to control them.”<sup>27</sup> We need to recognize our limitations as to what we can gain through our efforts, and what we cannot. Socrates pointed out that Dan’s limitation is in his inability to ensure that he attains the gold, and in the futility of “living in fear that (he) might fail.” He refutes Dan thus: “accept that you don’t control what will happen to you.” Unavoidable external factors can cause bad things to happen, despite the efforts one puts forward to make them not happen. Relatively speaking, this does not mean that one should not attempt to take precautions to prevent “bad things” from happening.

Next, the fallacy of “jumping on the bandwagon” is refuted by Socrates when he tells Dan, “That’s the first part of your training, learning to throw out everything you don’t need in here.” We are free to examine other people’s values and opinions and to use them as references; however, we need not adopt them as our own goals or objectives. This is evident in Socrates response to Dan’s shame in crying: “Emotions are natural, like the passing weather.”

In addition, Socrates refuted the negative ratings of Dan by his father and the Coach. According to Dr. Cohen, “doing something worthless doesn’t equate to being totally worthless.”<sup>28</sup> In the minds of Dan and others around him, getting the gold medal meant success. However, “self-respect involves unconditional, self-acceptance based on a deep philosophical understanding of human worth and dignity. Respect for others consistently extends this profound respect for unconditional human worth and dignity to other human beings.”<sup>29</sup> In contrast, jumping on the bandwagon may lead us to surrender our self-respect and dignity by following blindly even when others are wrong. And in doing so we further prevent ourselves from experiencing peace of mind. Along these lines, Socrates pointed out that Dan’s insomnia could be “because, maybe, late at night, when all the noise dies down and you’re lying there in the bed, and there’s nobody around but you, then, maybe, you get a little scared? Scared, because suddenly, everything feels so empty.” Instead, we need to listen to our inner voices. Socrates advised Dan, “You don’t need him or any letter to get up on those rings and do what you love.” That is, he did not need anyone else’s approval to perform well. In this respect, when Dan demanded that his coach show him some respect, he should have, in turn, respected himself more. Otherwise, his shouting and kicking was self-defeating. The more you kick and scream the less respectable and credible you are likely to appear.

Dan was constantly under pressure of not being selected to the Olympic team (“I am a heartbeat away from qualifying”). To him, not being selected would be the worst possible thing. Therefore, when Socrates asked Dan, “If you don’t make the Olympic team, what will you do?” and “You must have thought about it,” he helped Dan to face his problems and not run away from them. Dan needed to find the meaning of life in the face of a broken leg. Dr. Cohen suggests that “if people

---

<sup>27</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 164.

<sup>28</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 151.

<sup>29</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 181.

never tried to overcome difficult or challenging things and instead retreated from them by telling themselves that they couldn't stand them, then there would be few human accomplishments worthy of pride, since all or most human accomplishments worthy of pride are made in the face of adversity.”<sup>30</sup> In Buddhist terms, we need to regard the distresses and difficulties as the turning point of succeeding in life.

Nevertheless, our perceptions really do not represent us as persons. As Socrates told Dan, “the mind is just a reflex organ. It reacts to everything. It fills your head with millions of random thoughts each day. None of these thoughts reveal any more about you than a freckle does at the end of your nose.” This is what the Buddha taught; human beings develop irrational worries by capturing their illusions and holding on to them as reality. Socrates tells Dan, “People are not their thoughts. They think they are and it brings them all kinds of sadness.” In other words, people can be their worst enemies. Therefore, we must recognize our irrational premises and dismiss them, just as we do distracting thoughts. In the film, Socrates points out that Dan's mind is filled with distracting thoughts: “I'm talking about getting up there and winning the gold right now.... The gold is a craving. ‘If only I had it, I'd be happy.’ Can't you hear it in there?” When Dan could not concentrate, Socrates further pointed out, “Your mind's filling up again. You're missing out on everything that's going on.” Worrying involves such distracting thoughts, which can obstruct our happiness. That is why Socrates advised Dan, “Take out the trash,” “... [learn] to throw out everything you don't need in here.” Next, at Strawberry Creek Bridge, Socrates claimed that, he “emptied” Dan's mind by pushing him off the bridge when he asked Socrates to walk faster. From “taking out the trash” to elevating his life, Dan's performance on the pommel horse, an unfamiliar exercise to him, was unexpectedly exceptional. To this incident, Dan claimed that, “I cleared my mind,” and that “I wasn't worried about what did happen, or what might happen, what could happen.”

Dan's lifestyle was sloppy and reckless, such as his careless eating and drinking habits, always rushing, speeding and running through red lights, and partying all night; and he stubbornly refused to give any of these things up. In response, Socrates taught Dan to be a real warrior through contemplation (meditation): “When you become a warrior,” admonished Socrates, “you learn to meditate in every action.” Meditation includes focusing in the right frame of mind, not just analyzing every routine during gymnastics practice. It includes paying attention, exercising diligence, and concentrating. Socrates advised Dan to adjust his pace in everyday life activities, such as eating slower.

Socrates: “That's why I'd say your eating is sloppy.”

Dan: “Who cares?”

Socrates: “You do ....”

---

<sup>30</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 151.

Socrates: “That is the difference between us. You practice gymnastics, I practice everything ....”

Socrates: “Slow down. You might taste something.”

When Dan complained that Socrates lives by too many rules, his response was, “Not rules. Things I've learned from my own life experience.” Acting as Dan’s life coach, Socrates advised Dan to give up his addictions. To which Dan retorted that, “name one thing I'm addicted to.” To which Socrates responded, “If I was your trainer, no meat, no TV, no alcohol, no drugs, and no sex.” When Dan finally agreed to Socrates’ philosophies, he told Socrates, “Whatever you tell me to do, I'm gonna do...And that's why I'm glad you're not my trainer.”

## **V. Cultivating the Path—Finding an Antidote to the Refuted Premises**

The Buddha has taught us “not to take the pain from a second arrow,” that is, the liberation of ultimate wisdom by accepting bodily distress but not that of the mind. In comparison to Buddhism, “knowing dissatisfaction” is identifying one’s emotional reasoning and its irrational premises; “terminating the causes” is refuting those irrational premises; “realizing the cessation” is in the training of willpower, that is, “The Eightfold Path’s Right Effort”; “cultivating the path” is formulating the antidotes, that is, “The Eightfold Path’s Right Mind, Right Reflections, Right Speech, Right Actions, and Right Livelihood.” In the film, Dan held on stubbornly to whatever he deemed rational. He questioned Socrates’s motives. Therefore, Socrates assured him that he provided maintenance service: “This is a service station. We offer service. There's no higher purpose. Than pumping gas? Service to others.” As the common saying goes, we need to know where the clog is before we fix a clogged pipe; just as well, we need to know where a leak is before we can stop a leak.<sup>31</sup> As Dr. Cohen points out, “Once you see the flaw in your thinking, you can see what might remedy it.” As we often see in self-destructive emotions, there are mistaken perceptions endlessly feeding each other. In the film, at the height of his depression, Dan finally realized that the greatest enemy in his life was himself when he climbed on top of his school’s bell tower. He also realized that he must conquer this “enemy” to solve his problem. This brings us to the question of how to conquer negative perceptions and then find the correct antidote. Dr. Cohen believes that philosophical theories provide ample resources in this respect; they can help us to overcome our self-disparaging (sometimes fatal) thoughts. The theory of LBT also provides that there are eleven Cardinal Fallacies along with their respective transcendent or guiding virtues,<sup>32</sup> which include courage, respect, authenticity, temperance, and scientificity. These virtues all point to positive and constructive ends that can help guide our actions. This is exactly what helped Dan to achieve his path to happiness.

---

<sup>31</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 149.

<sup>32</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 180-183.

One general antidote for Dan's habit of "magnifying risks" is that, "to reduce the chances of something going wrong, you should avoid acting blindly and impetuously."<sup>33</sup> In other words, if Dan really cared about keeping his physical performance in shape, he should have been more diligent in safety precautions during his routine exercises. This might have included prudently executing every move in order to reduce the chances of mistakes, and not driving over the speeding limit, which increases the risk of getting into a car accident. A further antidote for "demanding perfection" is to be mentally prepared for disappointments and to overcome negative perceptions in the face of disappointment. However, excellent performance comes from a peaceful mind, and the overcoming of irrational, distracting thoughts; it is not a result of magic. In the film, Dan's teammate, Tommy, suffered from nervousness and anxiety and hoped for last-minute miracles to achieve top scores. He asked Dan, "I mean, it's like a miracle or something, Dan-o. Whatever you learned, man, whatever that guy taught you... You think... You think maybe you can rub a little of that magic onto me?" Ironically, Dan had become his teammate's consultant. At that moment, Dan appeared to be a magician with magical powers; and he suddenly realized that Tommy was behaving just like he did: helplessly. Tommy was like a mirror that let Dan see how he was before he met Socrates. However, Dan knew well that he had changed; he was now a free person living in the moment; he knew how to think rationally, how to keep his problems in control without trying to control others. Accordingly, Dan told Tommy, "It's not magic, Tommy. Just getting rid of all that bullshit you have up in your head." Dan finally knew that he should "accept that [he doesn't] control what will happen to [him]." This can be interpreted as a comparison between old and new perceptions, that is, Buddha's teaching of "ignorance is enlightenment." Letting go of the old perceptions, Dan had learned to replace the absolutes, the impracticable musts and should-haves, with preferences.

As such, an antidote for "demanding control" is to "surrender the one thing you never have and never will. Realize that this is a desire for control. Then accept that you don't control what will happen to you." In Dan's case, he thought that happiness was built upon certain conditions. "If only I had it, I'd be happy. Can't you hear it in there? I'd get everything I want. I'd get to be happy." Dan's disillusionment led to his obsession with failure, and he became bound by it; his greatest concern was not getting selected to the Olympics team, which, he thought, would be THE dissatisfaction of his lifetime. Socrates then admonished him, "Nearly all of humanity shares your predicament, Dan. If you don't get what you want, you suffer. And even when you get exactly what you want, you still suffer because you can't hold onto it forever." Socrates cautioned that the question requiring direct attention is, "If you don't make the Olympic team, what will you do?" For changes needed to be made whether or not Dan was selected. Socrates' comment that Dan should "accept that you don't control what will happen to you" was, in reality, assisting him to realize what is in his control, such as driving within the speed limit.

---

<sup>33</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 160.

Socrates also helped Dan to see his self-worth. As LBT enjoins,

“Transcend the tendency to rate reality, including human reality, as utterly worthless or totally shitty and instead look for goodness and dignity. Global respect avoids rating the whole according to the part and looks favorably on the larger cosmic picture. Self-respect involves unconditional, self-acceptance based on a deep philosophical understanding of human worth and dignity. Respect for others consistently extends this profound respect for unconditional human worth and dignity to other human beings.”<sup>34</sup>

In the case of respecting and evaluating one self, “you should stick to rating actions (yours and others) and not persons. You should view your self-worth as a constant and not a variable that changes with successes, failures, or the approval and disapproval of others.”<sup>35</sup> Instead of blaming himself or others, because of his broken dream and broken leg, and degrading himself, because his coach gave up on him, Dan should have told himself, “even if the Coach gave up on me, I’m still a rational and autonomous person with value and dignity. My worth does not decrease a bit just because he deserted me.” This is also supported by LBT’s antidotal advice that, “You should make a reasonable effort to achieve your goals and to get what you want, but you should be realistic in the goals you set.”<sup>36</sup> A further antidote to Dan’s angry reactions--such as breaking his trophies in the dormitory and climbing on top of the school’s bell tower—is to “make rational arguments instead of the stinky gas of self-defeating, self-degrading tantrums. You should push yourself to maintain rational control over your skeletal muscles. No kicking, jerking, scowling, teeth clenching, growling, screaming, foot stamping, fist pounding, arm flinging, or other wild body movements, please!”<sup>37</sup> Similarly, after Dan got out of the hospital, instead of sitting under a tree driving himself into depression by ruminating about unreality, he could have given himself permission, and affirmed his moral right to be happy and not to suffer even if something seemed wrong or didn’t go his way.<sup>38</sup>

For the problem of “jumping on the bandwagon,” LBT warns, “in deciding whether or not to follow the pack, you should consider its possible negative effects on your personal autonomy, individuality, authenticity, and potential for creative living.”<sup>39</sup> We often think that it is safer being with the crowd. However, making oneself dependent on others’ thoughts, feelings, and deeds often leads to jealousy, anxiety, and anger, which brings us neither true happiness nor safety. What fits others may not fit us. Instead, true happiness is attained by giving up the demand for the approval of others and replacing it with the transcendent or guiding virtue of authenticity. Thus, one should aim at “autonomously and freely living according to one’s own creative lights as opposed to losing oneself

---

<sup>34</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 181.

<sup>35</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 151.

<sup>36</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 150.

<sup>37</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 155.

<sup>38</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 153.

<sup>39</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 157.



on a bandwagon of social conformity.”<sup>40</sup>

Next, an antidote for “feeling helpless” is to “look upon difficult or challenging things as opportunities to grow through the experience of trying, rather than as occasions for failing.”<sup>41</sup> This involves using one’s willpower to overcome difficult situations. In the film, this theme of growth through adversity is symbolized when Joy tells Dan, “maybe I don’t think your leg is the only thing that got broken.” Then, using the “healing power of touch,” she eventually helped Dan face the sunlight with love, courage, and positive thinking.

In the scene when Dan questioned Socrates’ quest for wisdom, he asked, “If you know so much, how come you’re working at a gas station?” Socrates responded, “This is a service station. We offer service. There’s no higher purpose. Than pumping gas? Service to others.” From this dialogue, we can see the common perception for a gas station’s function, which is supplying gas to vehicles of a material form. There is often no supplemental gas (energy) to the mind. Although our body receives supplements by exercising, our mind is squandering the supplements. We should be aware that we need other people to provide us with “full service” whenever we’re squandering ourselves. This could be interpreted in Buddhism as seeking a teacher to help us see the reality behind our obsessions whenever we drift into illusion, that is, “liberating ourselves when we are enlightened.” In the film’s interpretation, this is when Socrates told Dan, “But knowledge is not the same as wisdom……Wisdom is doing it. When you feel fear, use the sword. Take it up here and cut the mind to ribbons. Slash through all those regrets and fears and anything else that lives in the past or the future.”

Socrates helped Dan to see the reality behind his obsessions by asking him a series of questions, such as, “So why can't you sleep at night? Yesterday, you came here at 3:00 A.M. Now, tonight. That's two nights in a row.” “Are you happy? I mean, are you really happy?” To which Dan retorted, “What are you? Some kind of a Quickie-Mart-philosopher, or something like that? You need some philosophy?” Socrates therefore emerged as a philosophical counselor available at all hours, seven days a week. Accordingly, later on, Socrates talked to Dan about the problems in certain aspects of his life, such as, eating and drinking, the opposite sex, social life, smoking and alcohol, the downside of chasing after pleasure, how not to let his emotions control him, and the nature of rules and exceptions to them.

By asking series of questions, Socrates’ method involved checking for such things as counter examples, evidence glitches, self-defeating consequences, and double standards.<sup>42</sup> This is similar to

---

<sup>40</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 181.

<sup>41</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 151.

<sup>42</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 146.

the Buddhist teaching of choosing the middle (neutral) path, thus aiding in maintaining the balance between excess and falling short. Similarly, in LBT, “awfulizing about events in your life is one extreme; denying that bad things happen is another; but putting the bad things in your life into perspective in relation to other aspects of your life is rational.”<sup>43</sup> Along these lines, in the “Peaceful Warrior,” several issues were addressed including: fear and fearlessness, life and death, conceit and inferiority, knowledge and wisdom (as doing), process and goal, courage and cowardliness, happiness and prosperity, flexibility between firm and gentle, an-eye-for-an-eye and making peace, garbage and tranquility (i.e. ignorance as enlightenment), the purity and contamination of meditation and scrubbing the toilet, emptiness (clearing out the negatives) and fullness, moderate self-discipline and unrestrained habits, fast and slow, trial and assuming responsibility, arrogance and modesty, hurt and cure, gain and loss, contamination and purity, courage (including acceptance of one’s own weaknesses and being mortal) and shrinking back, pain and pleasure, short-term and long-term (nurturing of virtues, manipulation of habits), desistance and persistence, lack of experience and mindfulness about life. Regarding such extremes, in Buddhism, the cultivation of the middle-path and the Five Precepts militate against following the teachings and precepts blindly. Instead, each step of those practices requires critical thinking. For example, “Perceiving an absolute duty to upset yourself over your problems is one extreme; avoiding responsibility entirely is another; but doing what you reasonably can about your problem and then leaving yourself alone is rational.”<sup>44</sup> “That knowledge is not the same as wisdom. Wisdom is doing,” said Socrates. “Did you notice how the right leverage can be very effective? What if I were to tell you that's what your training, even your life, is about? Developing the wisdom to apply the right leverage in the right place, at the right time. Take out the trash.” Here “Applying the right leverage in the right place, at the right time” is just like the cultivation of wisdom in knowing how to apply different antidotes. For example, “the ‘should’ antidotes can be useful because they give you positive instruction about what to do rather than what not to do. The ‘shouldn’t’ antidotes can often be useful because they clear the way for a “should” antidote.”<sup>45</sup> For athletes, when they start to practice a certain skill or routine in their exercises, if they only focus on sticking to the specific rules or techniques (knowledge), their muscles tend to tighten up and may lead to injuries in the long run. Therefore, athletes need to practice a certain routine over and over again until they are able to get the knack of that routine. Once they overcome the obstacles they confront in their practices, then they have attained the wisdom of direct contemplation, eventually honing the routine so that they can execute it with great ease.

## **VI. Realizing the Cessation (Awakening)—Exercising Willpower in Overcoming Cognitive Dissonance.**

---

<sup>43</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 148.

<sup>44</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 148.

<sup>45</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 163.

In the film, Socrates advised Dan, “People are afraid of what’s inside, and that’s the only place they’re ever gonna find what they need.” “You have to be strong if you’re gonna do this, Dan.” His point was that, in order to fully train his mind and develop his spiritual energy, Dan needed to not be afraid anymore; he should not be aggravated or blame himself/other people/the world. Dan needed to learn to face both favorable and unfavorable circumstances with calmness; he had to have the courage to face multiple situations and not to underreact or overreact when evaluating risks. This meant that Dan needed to be able to respond appropriately when coming face to face with the actual circumstances involving risk, keeping his fear within reason. Indeed, a courageous person realizes that “bad” is a relative concept, seeing that things could always get worse. Such a person is willing to endure reasonable risks, and, therefore, to attain positive value through unfortunate circumstances.

“To be a real warrior” also requires the training of one’s willpower, not just exquisite techniques and muscle training. That is, to become what Socrates called, “someone who uses his mind and his body in ways that most people would never have the courage to.” In Socrates’ view, “a warrior is not about perfection or victory or invulnerability.” On the contrary, being a warrior is about absolute vulnerability. That is the only true courage. Therefore, despite the common perception of a warrior being unbeatable, it is normal for a warrior to experience setbacks. Socrates encouraged Dan to be a meditative warrior:

“When you become a warrior, you learn to meditate in every action.”

“Scrubbing toilets?”

“Letting go of attachments.”

“Like your pride....”

“A warrior does not give up what he becomes. .... He is realistic and responsible for his actions.”

Socrates pointed out that we should recognize our limitations, and respect others unconditionally. As such, we should be willing to inspire ourselves and armor up for the battlefield.

LBT teaches that, “You should *do* what you reasonably can do about your problem and then leave yourself (and others) alone. Instead of ruminating about your problem, you should exert your willpower to go on with your life by doing things you like to do or think would be productive.”<sup>46</sup>

LBT uses muscle training as a metaphor for training the willpower through continuous practices. And this takes a lifetime of practice in taking responsibility for one’s own choices. Just as Socrates pointed out to Dan, “the habit is the problem. All you need to do is be conscious about your choices and responsible for your actions.” Also, “Life is a choice. You can choose to be a victim or anything else you’d like to be. A warrior acts. Only a fool reacts.”

---

<sup>46</sup> Cohen, *What Would Aristotle Do*, 153.

In Ch'an philosophy, "non-duality" means "developing the wisdom to apply the right leverage in the right place, at the right time," so as not to fall into the extreme opposites of excess and deficiency. Socrates said that "Every what has its what. Every action has its price and its pleasure. Recognizing both sides, a warrior becomes ... realistic and responsible for his actions." Therefore, when Dan completely gave up exercising on the rings and would not even mention it, Socrates prompted him, "I think you should continue your training as a gymnast." As a matter of fact, Dan did not really give up. On the contrary, he scorned Socrates' idea about "letting-go" by saying, "Maybe you're just a case of someone who, not having made much of themselves, says that the world is lost and all these things don't matter." Also, despite Dan's depression over his leg injury, Socrates still tried to encourage him by making ironic yet probable comments such as, "It shattered. You fractured your femur in 17 different pieces"; "I'm sure you'll eventually be able to walk again"; "Now, in a few months, you'll be able to start the rehab process." This could be interpreted as Socrates coaching Dan to practice taking "rational control over his actions, emotions, and will."<sup>47</sup> From thinking that he will never make it, to learning to strengthen his willpower; then telling his coach how he would counter the doctor's diagnosis, Dan eventually did make it to the competition. Throughout this process, Dan realized what Socrates had told him, "Everything has a purpose... And it's up to you to find it." Through Socrates' various philosophies, Dan learned to reframe breaking his leg as an opportunity for growth. By taking the initiative and freedom to choose, he rebuilt the value of his life and realized that life is full of many surprises and unexpected turns of events. At the start, Dan only cared about chasing after the gold; he could not understand the meaning of physical and mental dedication in doing what he loved, and eventually developed anxiety and fear of what he desired. What Socrates taught Dan was that "there is no starting or stopping, only doing." He wanted Dan to learn how to unlock himself from the cage he had built for himself, and live in the here and now. Only then could Dan come to realize that "the journey's what brings us happiness, not the destination."

Through activity assignments, LBT guides the counselee to "make decisions without getting the approval of others and that, therefore, it is false-to-fact that one must have the approval of others."<sup>48</sup> In addition, counselees are trained to replace irrational reasoning with rational reasoning, rationally responding to the uncertainties the future holds, attaining a certain level of happiness, aspiring to virtue, and setting up positive goals. All these were depicted in the film when Socrates takes Dan on many outdoor activities. He taught Dan to be sensitive and observant, to recognize changes to his body and mind, expand his view, and to enjoy the journey that he was on. All the while, he taught him to persevere; for only then would he attain true happiness. Similarly, according to Buddhist philosophy, ignorance or illusory perceptions and emotions are the black clouds shrouding the sun. Only by realizing our negative temperaments, contemplating the causes of our actions, and

---

<sup>47</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 182.

<sup>48</sup> Cohen, *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop Handbook*, 166.

learning self-control, can we nurture willpower and self-confidence.

The Buddha also teaches us to see a thread of hope in every situation. For example, when we suffer setbacks and failures, we must see them as the opportunity to grow, and to be grateful for these opportunities. Through the cultivation of “non-duality,” we can learn to focus on a balanced life, taking control of difficulties with a calm mind, working on transforming our Three Poisons (ignorance, attachment, and aversion), and be mindful of the changes occurring to our physical and mental surroundings. Then we will see that happiness arises from true understanding and observation (of ourselves).

## **VII. Conclusion**

In conclusion, our sufferings, or dissatisfactions, are the effects or results of irrational thoughts and premises; and termination of those dissatisfactions is attained by refuting those irrational premises. As long as we can maintain the Right Mind (mindfulness), we can face the world with love and kindness-and-compassion, reverse the provincialisms, and liberate ourselves from negative thinking. Our dissatisfactions increase as a result of many factors in life, such as, unexpected accidents, inability to face adversity and rebuild a worthy life; and, therefore, our unwillingness to accept failure in the things about which we care. In the film, “Peaceful Warrior,” the main character, Dan, went through the ordeal of a car accident, unable to participate in the Olympic team-selection, losing his self-confidence and his love for gymnastics. In the end, Dan eventually learned how to face competitions with a different mindset from before. He learned to enjoy what he loves about gymnastics and not to trap himself in the process of obtaining the gold medal. As well, Dan learned that what is most important is not the approval of other people. Instead, the most important things are clear-headedness, peace of mind, and being responsible for one’s own choices.

## **Bibliography**

1. Cohen, Elliot D. 2007. *The New Rational Therapy: thinking your way to serenity, success, and profound happiness* . Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield .
2. Cohen, Elliot D. 2003. *What Would Aristotle Do? Self-Control through the Power of Reason*. New York: Prometheus Books.
3. Cohen, Elliot D. 2011. *The Dutiful Worrier: How to stop compulsive worry without feeling guilty*. CA: New Harbinger Publications.
4. Cohen, Elliot D. 2014. *LBT Primary Certificate Intensive Workshop In Logic-Based Therapy Handbook*. Taiwan, Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association & Institute of Critical Thinking, USA.
- 5 “Peaceful Warrior” DVD